

# LGBTQ Youth in Massachusetts: What's Happening?

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# Objectives

- ◆ To explore 2 major data sources that can provide information about LGBTQ youth in Massachusetts
- ◆ To examine selected trends and group differences in the risk experiences of sexual and gender minority (LGBTQ) adolescents
- ◆ To examine some ways that MA schools can support sexual/gender minority students

# MA Youth Risk Behavior Survey

- ◆ Part of CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System
- ◆ 99 multiple choice questions about a variety of risk behaviors
- ◆ Anonymous survey of students in grades 9 - 12 in public high schools, usually taken in 1 class period
- ◆ Random selection of schools and classrooms within schools
- ◆ From 1995 through 2015, an average of 58 schools per administration -- 36,429 students in all.
- ◆ Representative of public high school students in MA as a whole

**The person(s) with whom you have had sexual contact is (are):**

- ◆ **a. *I have not had sexual contact with anyone***
- ◆ **b. *Female(s)***
- ◆ **c. *Male(s)***
- ◆ **d. *Female(s) and Male(s)***

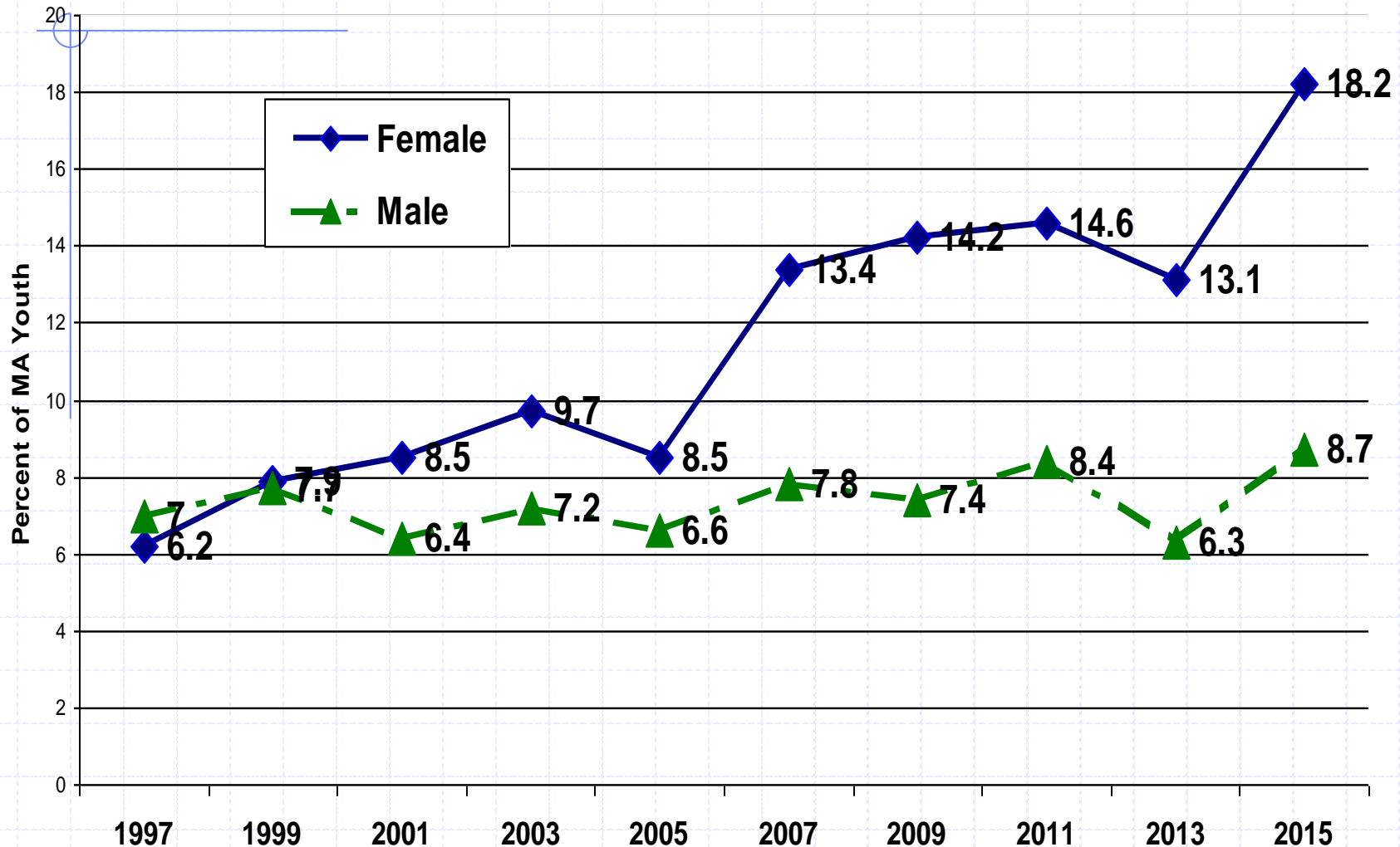
**Which of the following best describes you?**

- ◆ **a. *Heterosexual (straight)***
- ◆ **b. *Gay or lesbian***
- ◆ **c. *Bisexual***
- ◆ **d. *Not sure***

# Massachusetts YRBS 1995-2015

	HTX	Gay-Lesbian	Bisexual	Not Sure	Total
No Sexual Contact	15,387	98	253	518	16,056
Opposite Sex Only	17,711	47	320	306	18,384
Same Sex Only	424	126	78	31	659
Both Sex Partners	404	112	480	134	1,130
Total	33,926	383	1,131	989	36429

# Percent of MA Youth Who Are Sexual Minority



It's been harder to measure whether or not students are transgender . . .but we added a transgender question in 2013

◆ Please choose the one best-fitting response.

◆ A transgender person is someone whose biological sex at birth does not match the way they think or feel about themselves. Are you transgender?

- ◆ ☐ No, I am not transgender
- ◆ ☐ Yes, I am transgender and think of myself as really a boy or man
- ◆ ☐ Yes, I am transgender and think of myself as really a girl or woman
- ◆ ☐ Yes, I am transgender and I think of myself in some other way
- ◆ ☐ I don't know if I am transgender
- ◆ ☐ I don't know what this question is asking.

**2.1% = yes, transgender**

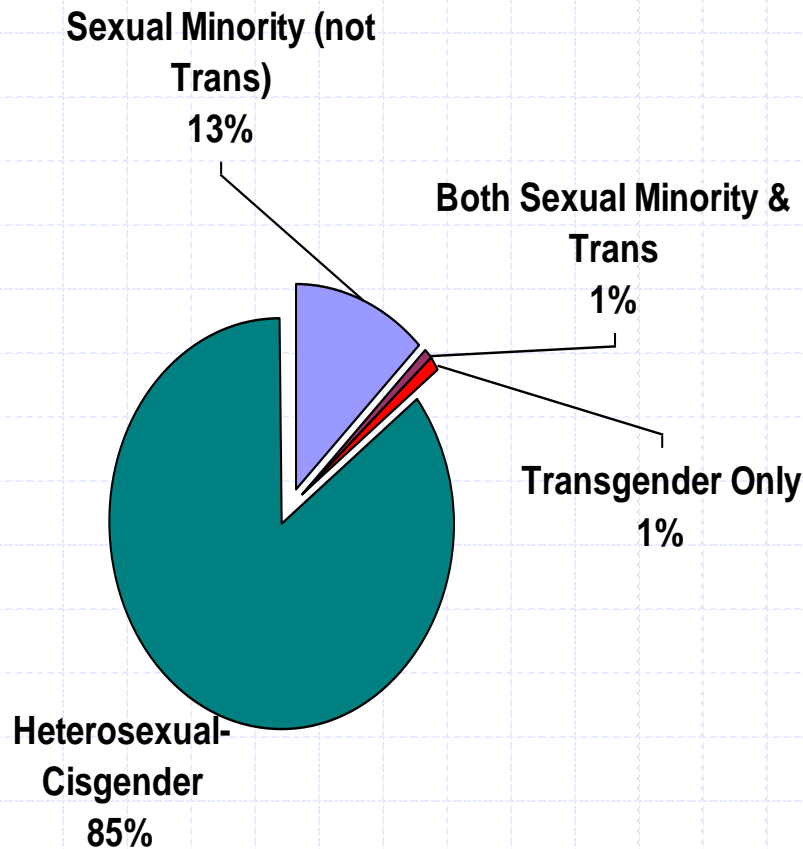
**0.8% = don't know**

**0.8% = don't understand the question**



# Altogether, 14.8% of MA Youth were Sexual and/or Gender Minority, 2015

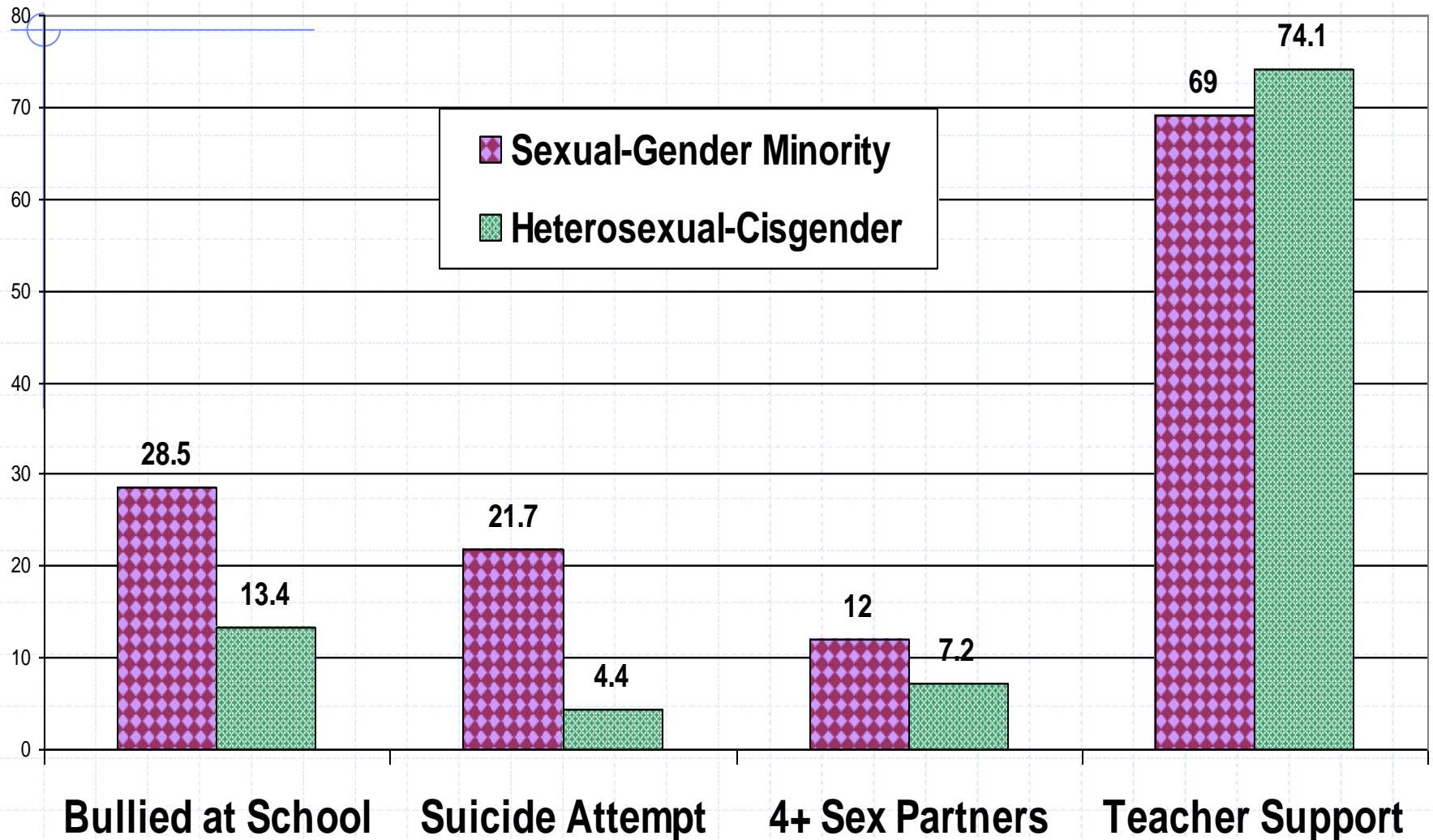
**SGMY**



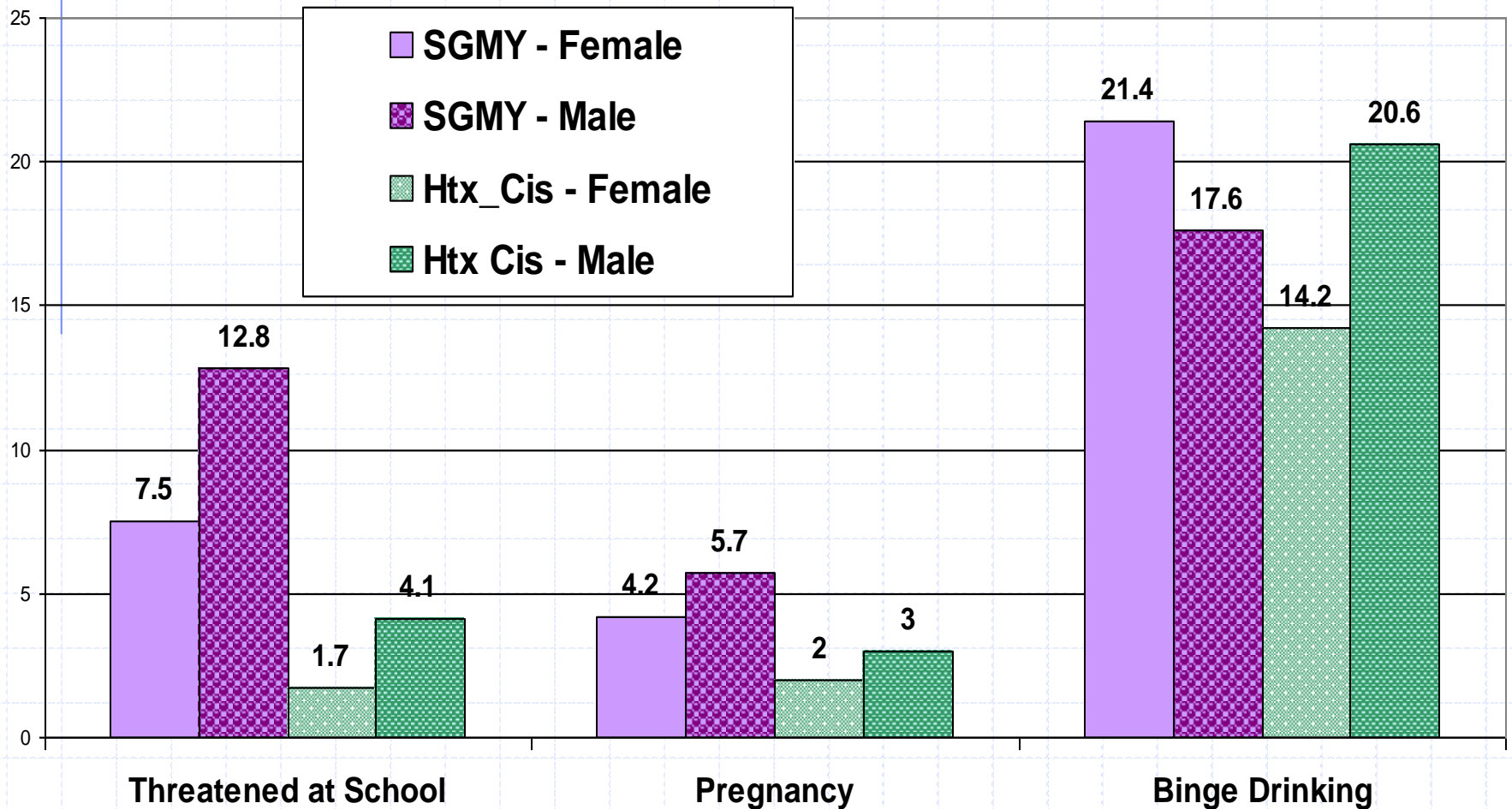
## **FYI: A “Gender Expression” question has been added to the MYRBS in 2017**

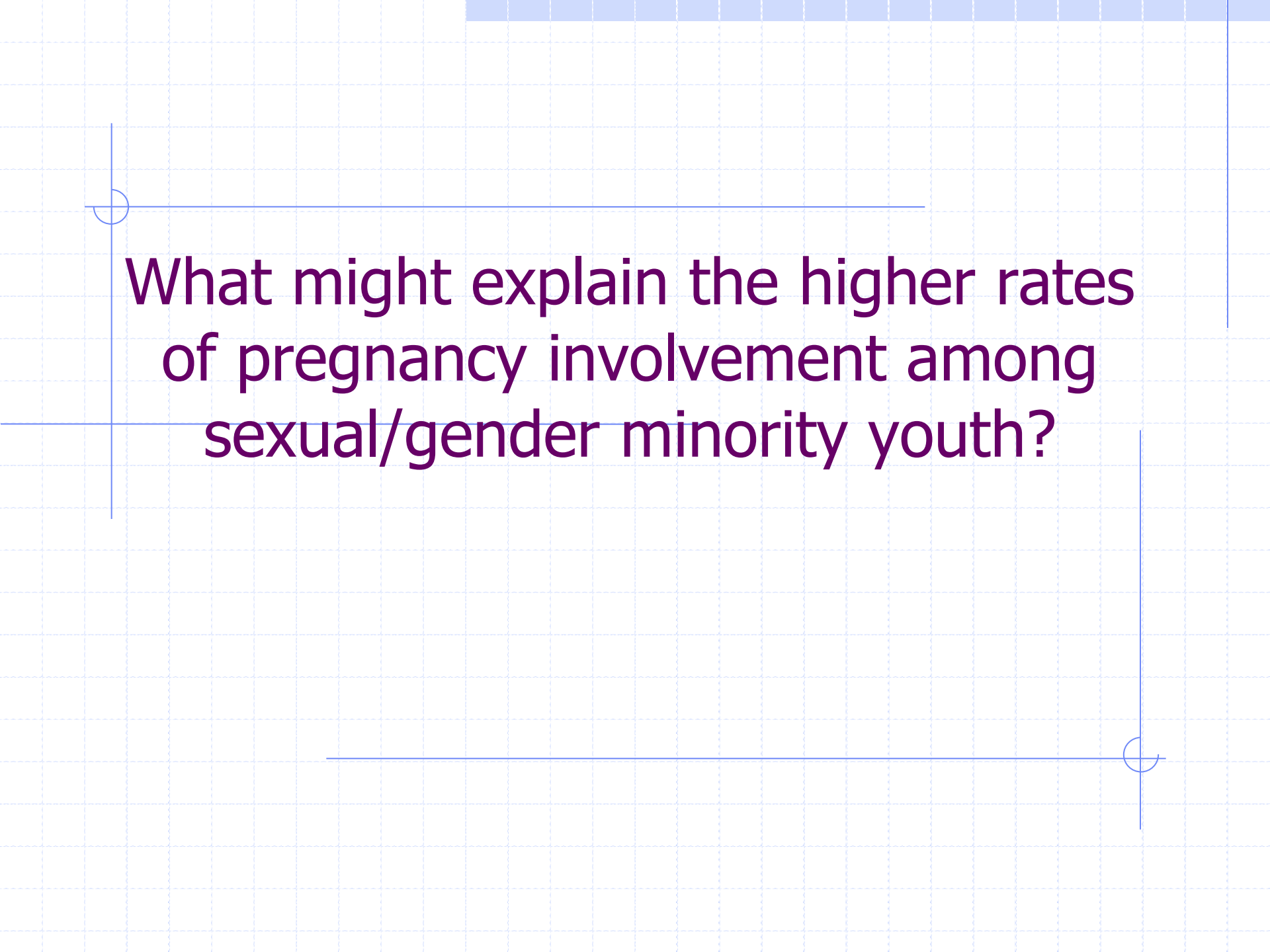
- ◆ Question: *A person’s appearance, style, dress, or the way they walk or talk may affect how people describe them. How do you think other people at school would describe you?*
- ◆ Response options: *Very feminine, Mostly feminine, Somewhat feminine, Equally feminine and masculine, Somewhat masculine, Mostly masculine, Very masculine*

# Risk Behaviors of SGMY and Heterosexual-Cisgender Students, 2015

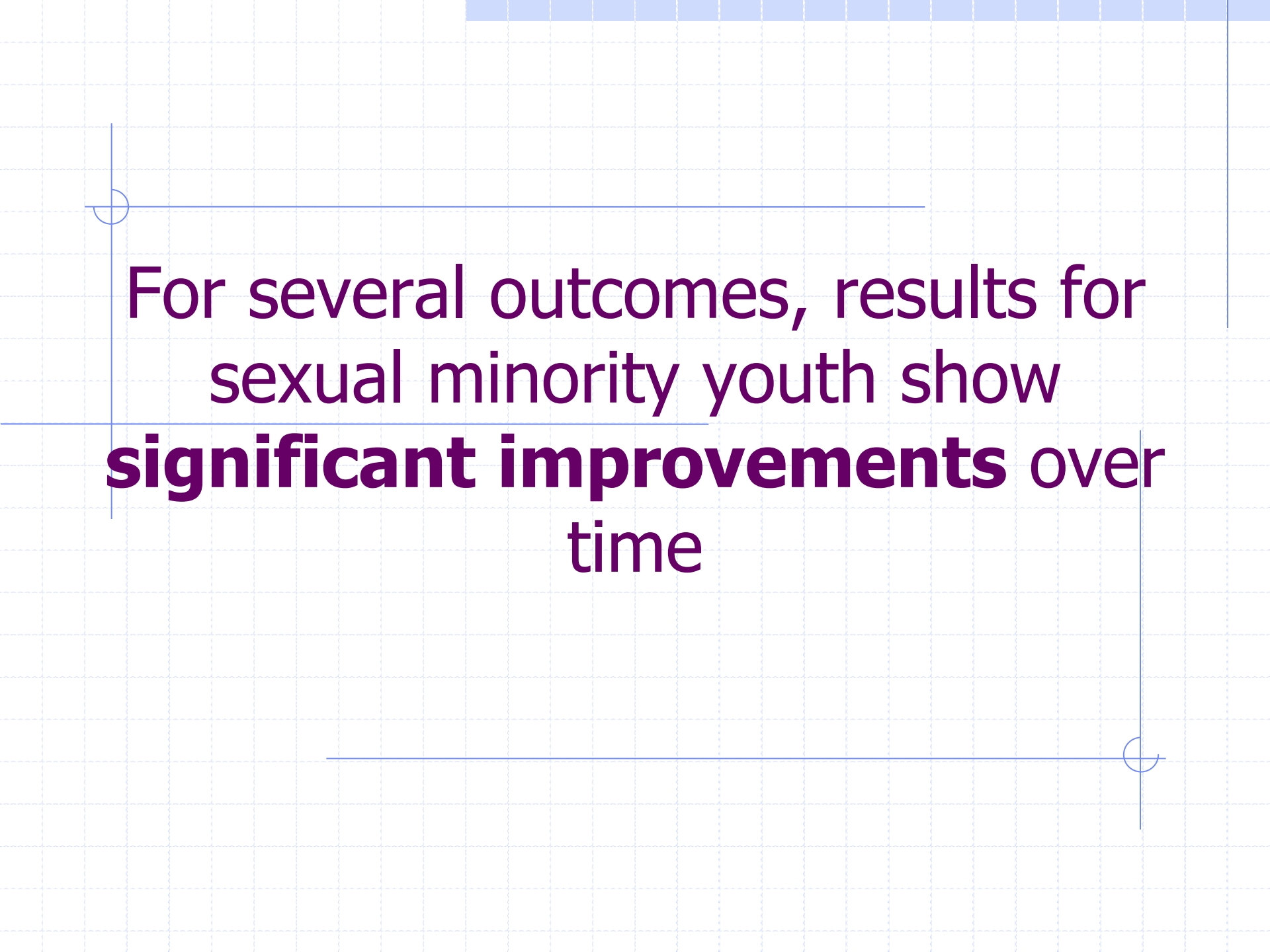


# Risks of Sexual/Gender Minority and Heterosexual-Cisgender Youth, 2015



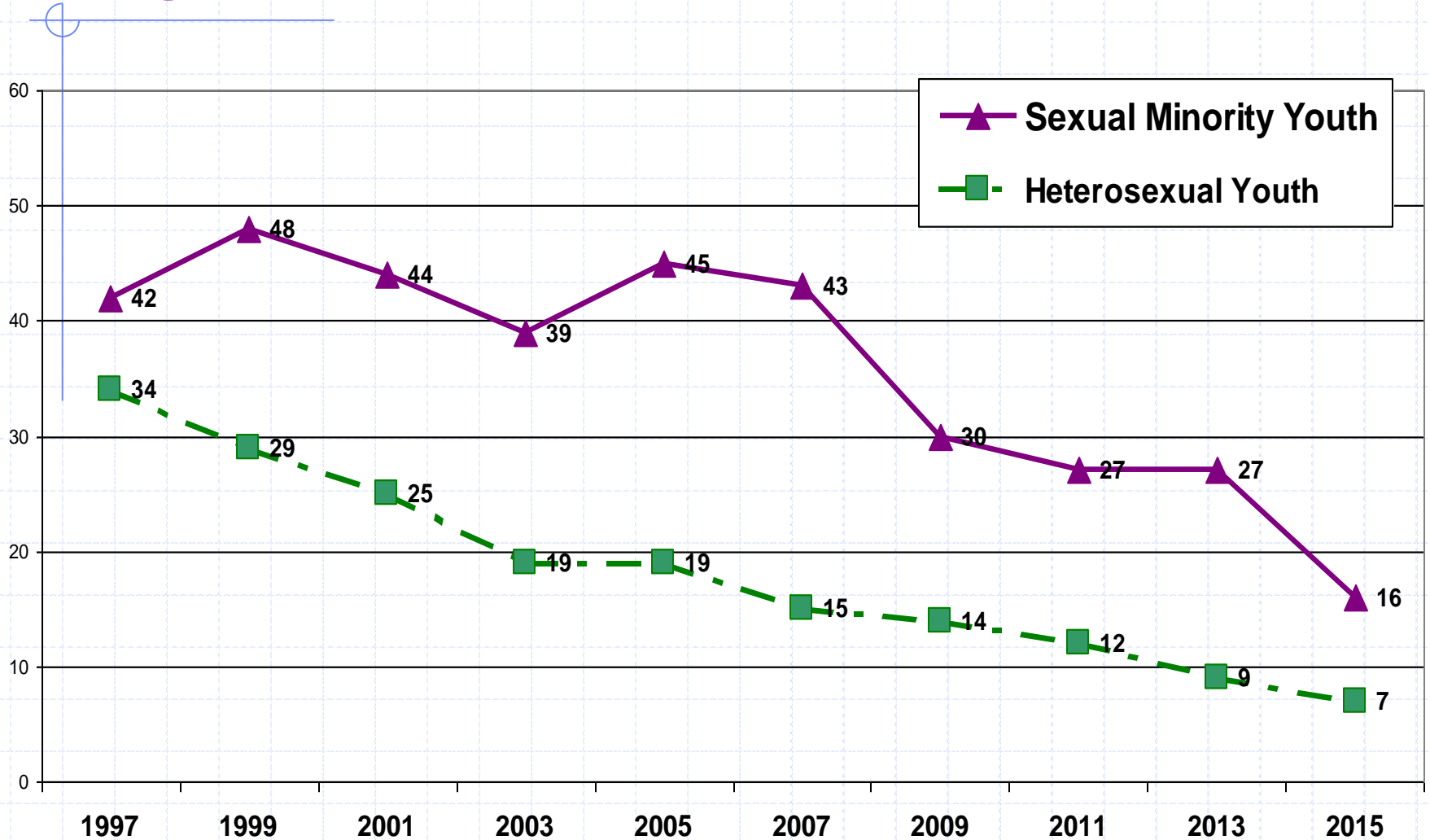


What might explain the higher rates  
of pregnancy involvement among  
sexual/gender minority youth?

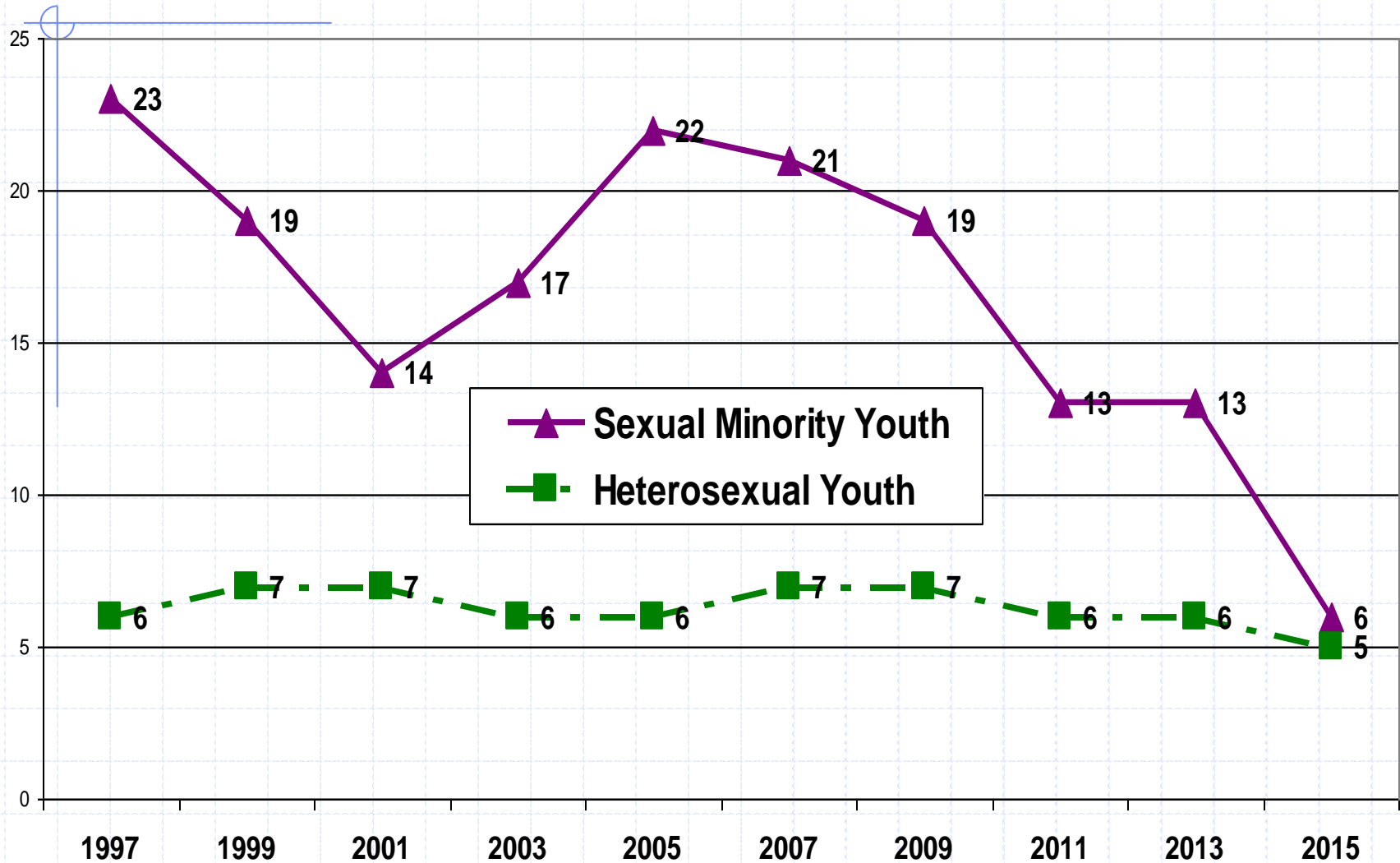


For several outcomes, results for  
sexual minority youth show  
**significant improvements** over  
time

# Percent of Students Who Smoked Cigarettes in the Past Month



# Percent of Youth with 2+ Sexual Partners in 3 months

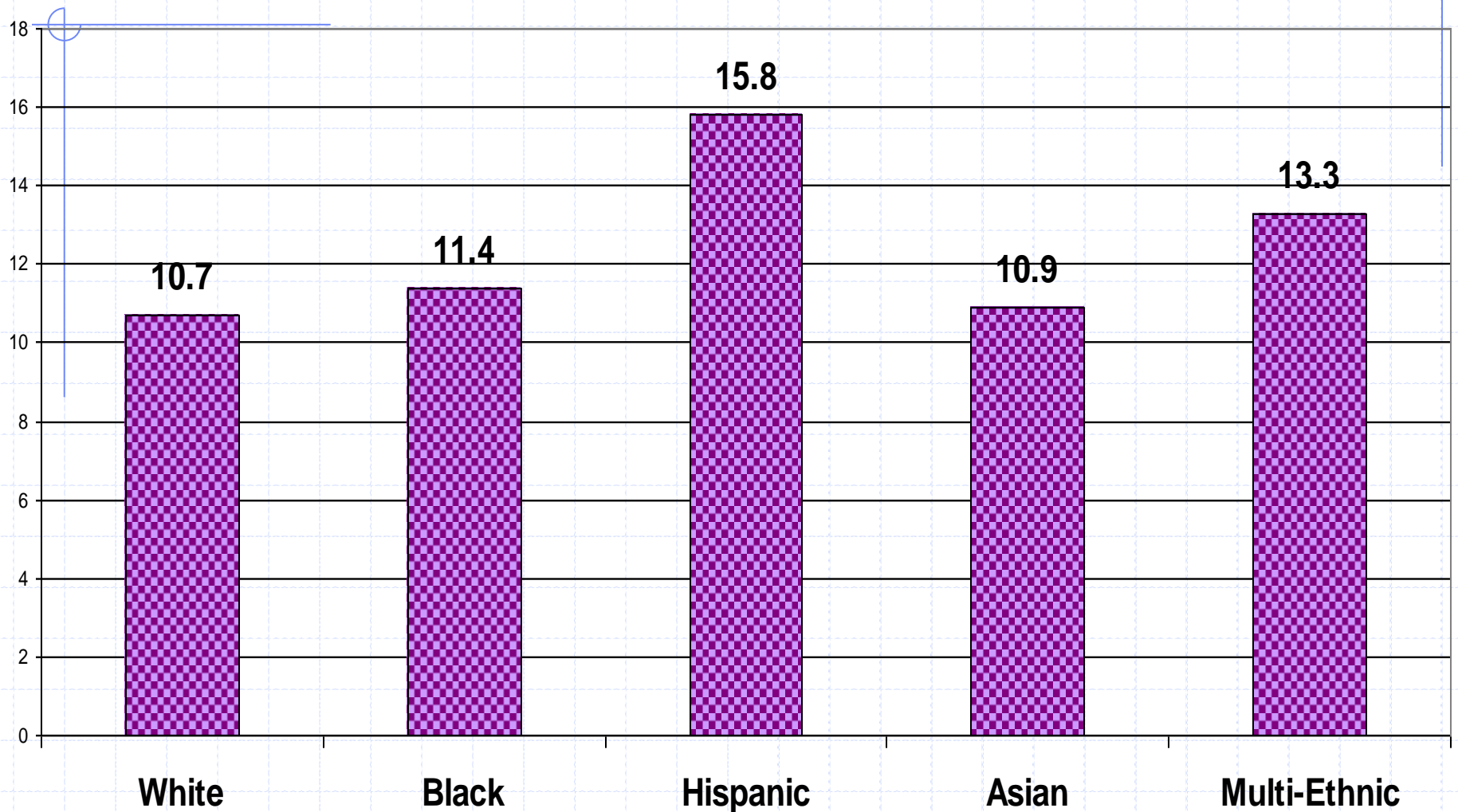




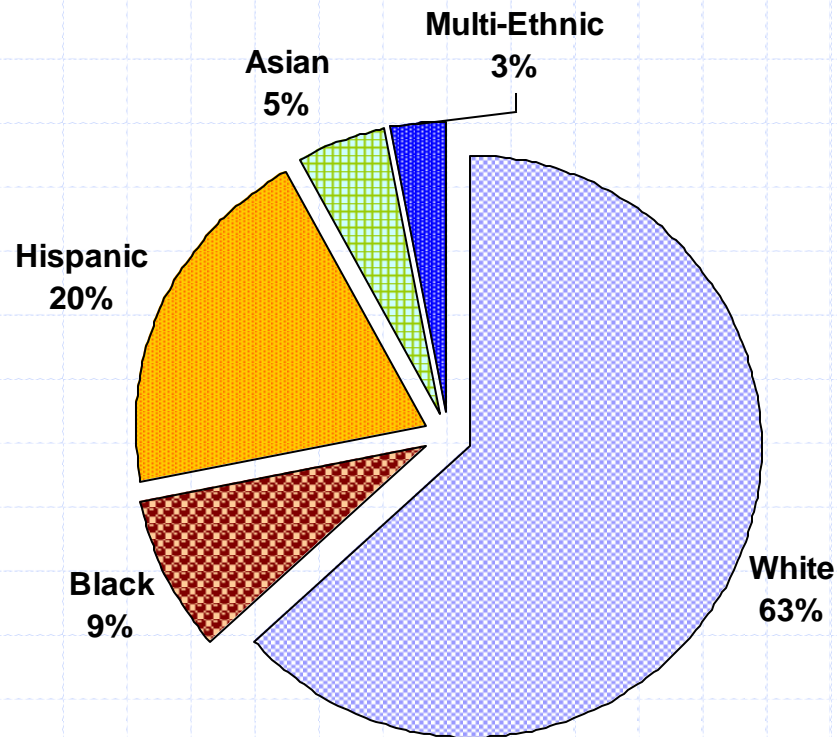
# Some subgroups of SMY report additional risk

- ◆ Ethnic differences
- ◆ Homelessness

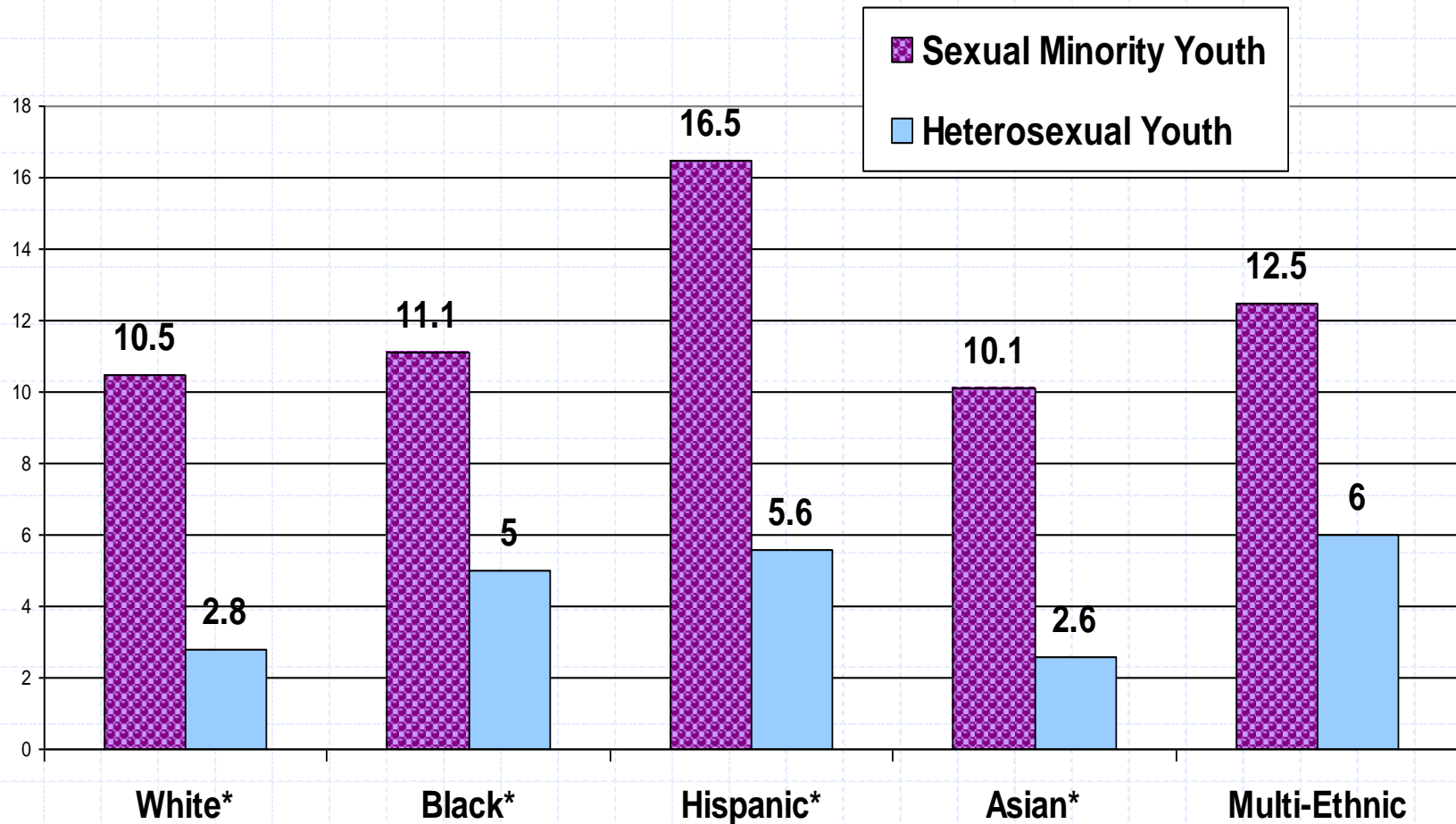
# Percent of MA Youth of Different Ethnicities Who Are Sexual Minority, 2011-2015



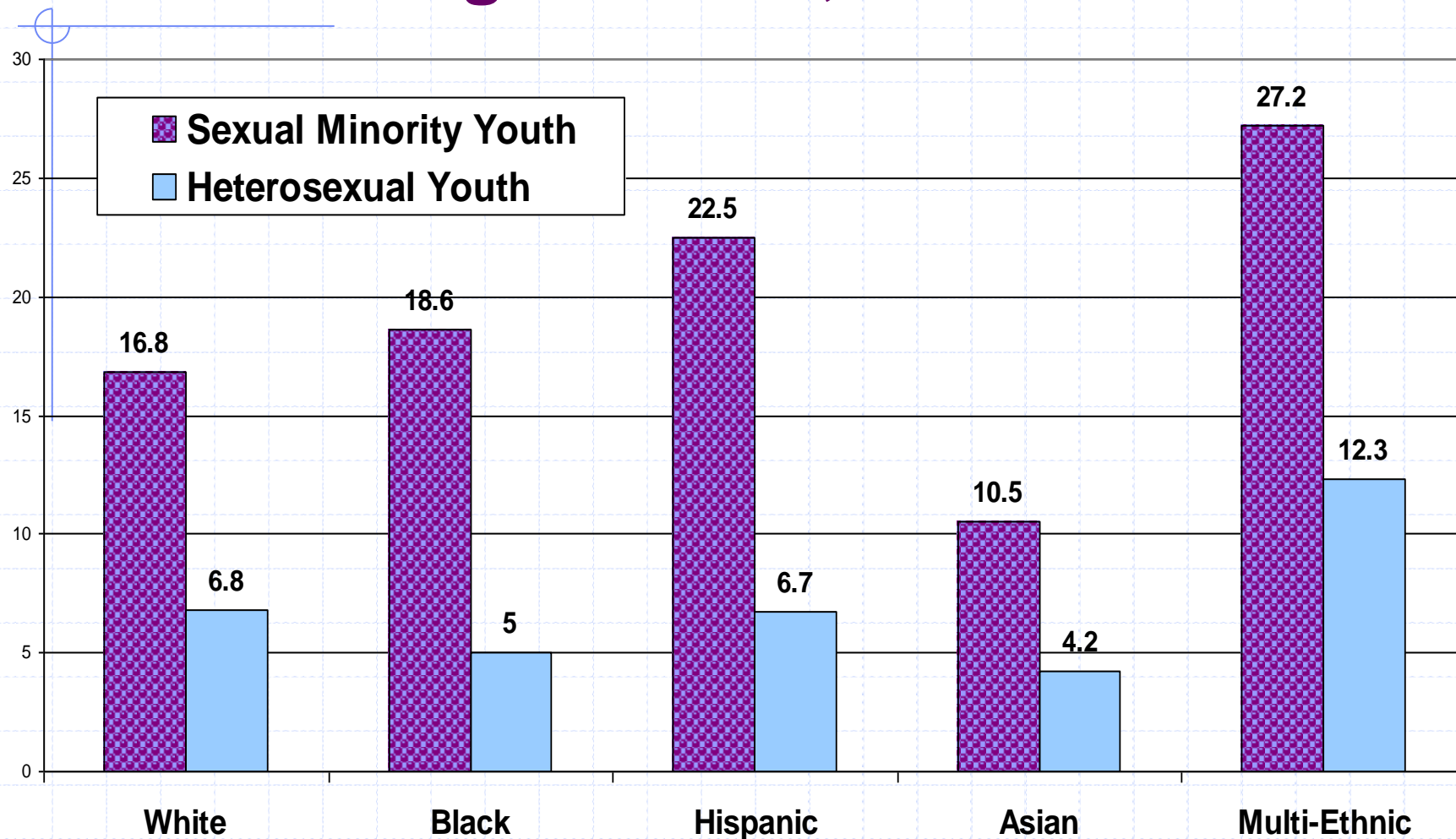
# Percent of Sexual Minority Youth Who Are Different Ethnicities, 2011-2015



# Percent of Youth Who Skipped School Because They Felt Unsafe, 2011-2015



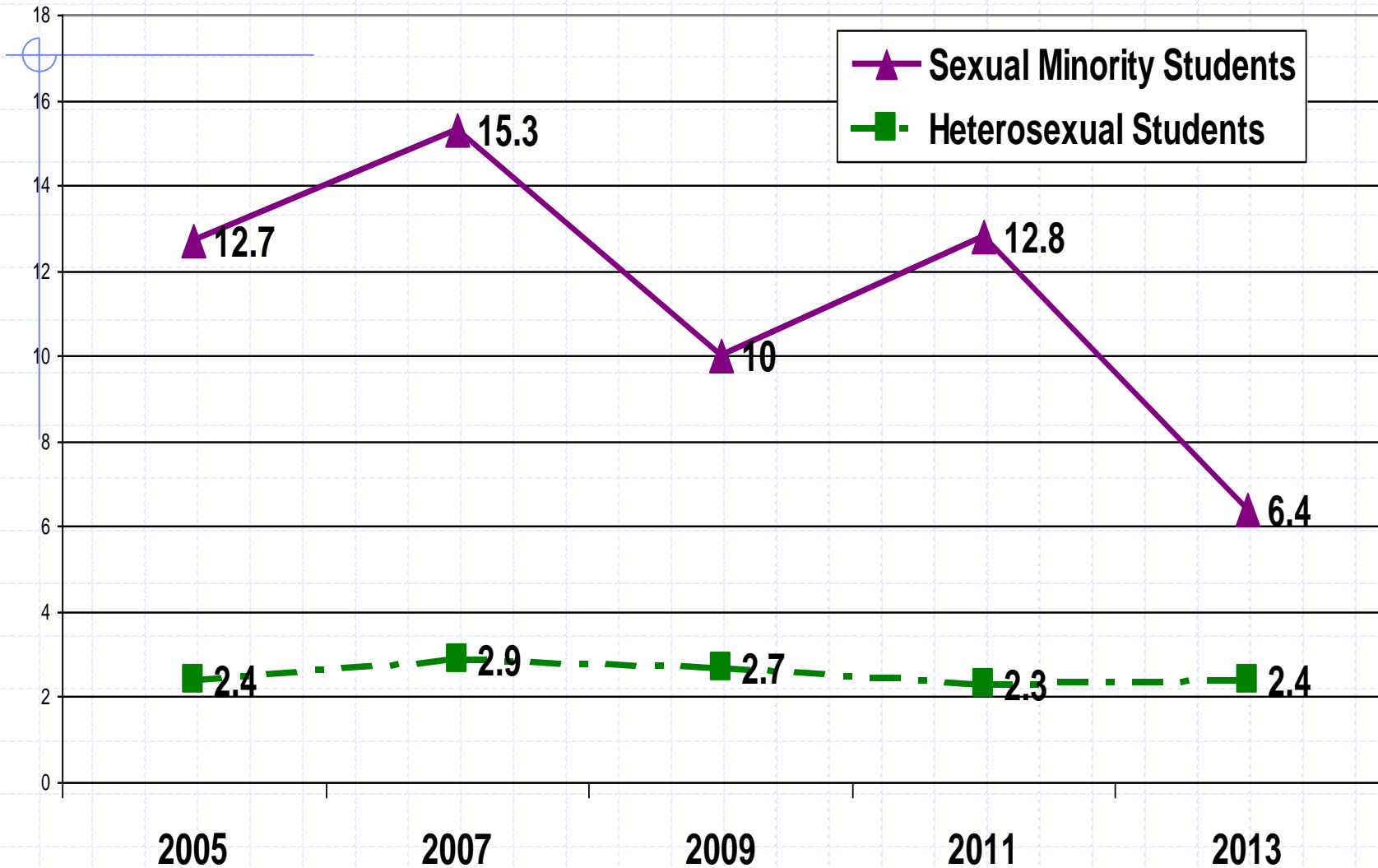
# Percent of Youth Who Experienced Dating Violence, 2011-2015



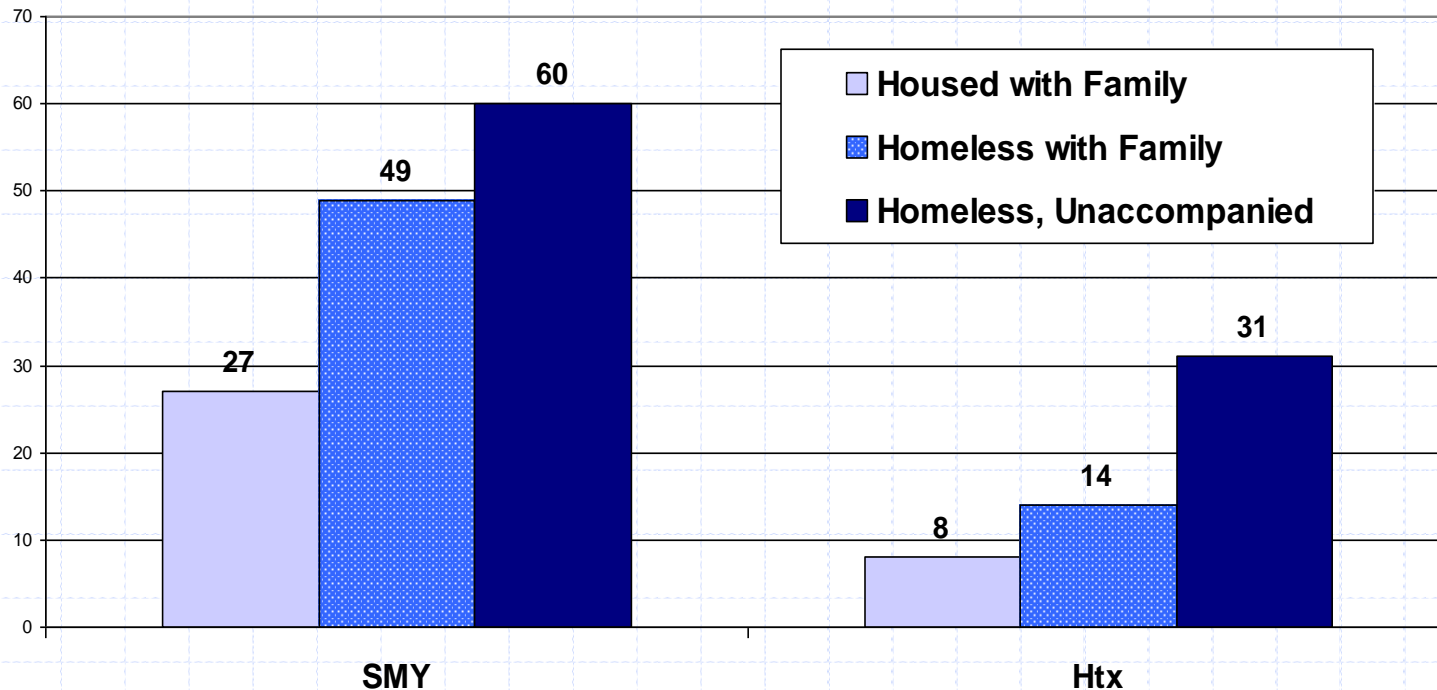


Homelessness also affects risk  
among sexual minority youth

## Percent of Students Who Are Homeless, MA 2005-2013

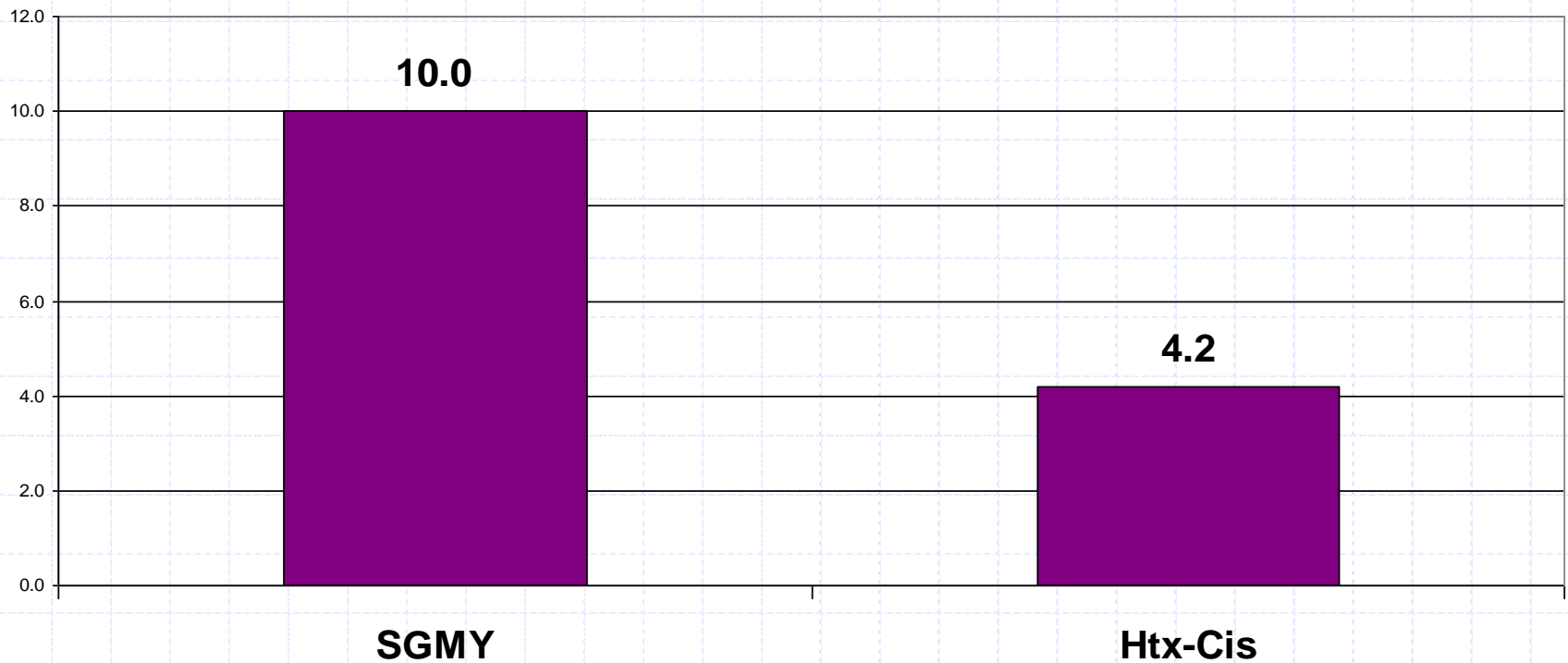


# Percent of Students Who Have Experienced Sex Against Their Will, 2005-2013





# Percent of Sexual/Gender Minority and Heterosexual-Cisgender Students Who Ran Away or Were Kicked Out or Abandoned, 2015





**What are schools doing?**

# School Health Profiles

- ◆ Survey of principals and “lead health teachers” in middle and high schools, developed by CDC
- ◆ Conducted every other (non-YRBS) year
- ◆ Includes questions about school policies and practices

# Profiles questions

- ◆ Does your school have a student-led club that aims to create a safe, welcoming, and accepting school environment for all youth, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity? These clubs are sometimes called **gay/straight alliances**.

# Does your school . . .

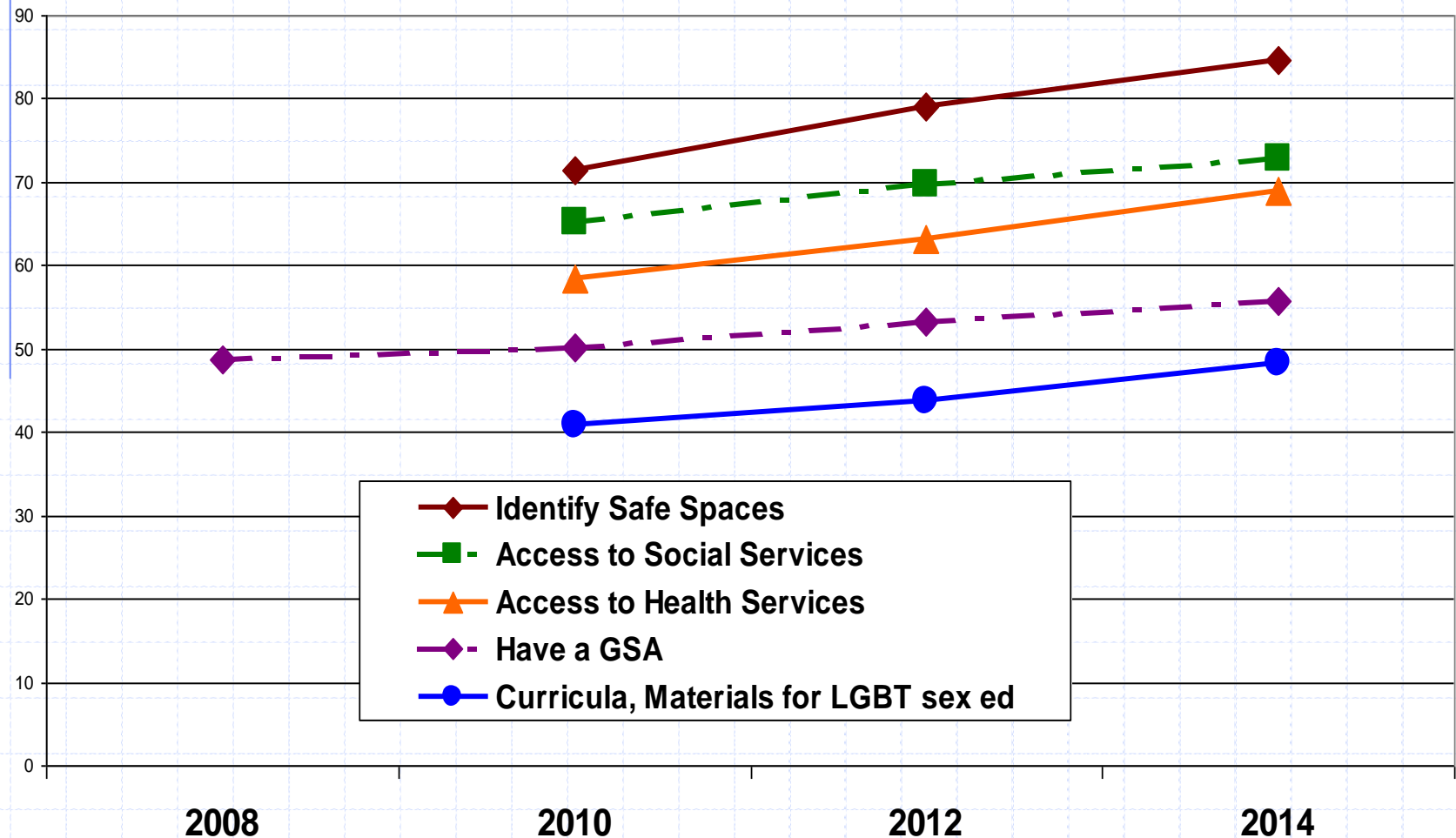
- ◆ Prohibit harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity
- ◆ Identify “safe spaces” for LGBT youth
- ◆ Encourage staff training on LGBT issues
- ◆ Provide access to health services for LGBT youth
- ◆ Provide access to social/psychological services for LGBT youth
- ◆ Have curricula and materials suitable for sexuality education for LGBT youth?

In schools where health teachers report having materials, confidence, and teaching approaches to address LGB sexual health issues, sexual minority students have lower rates of sexual risk behaviors.

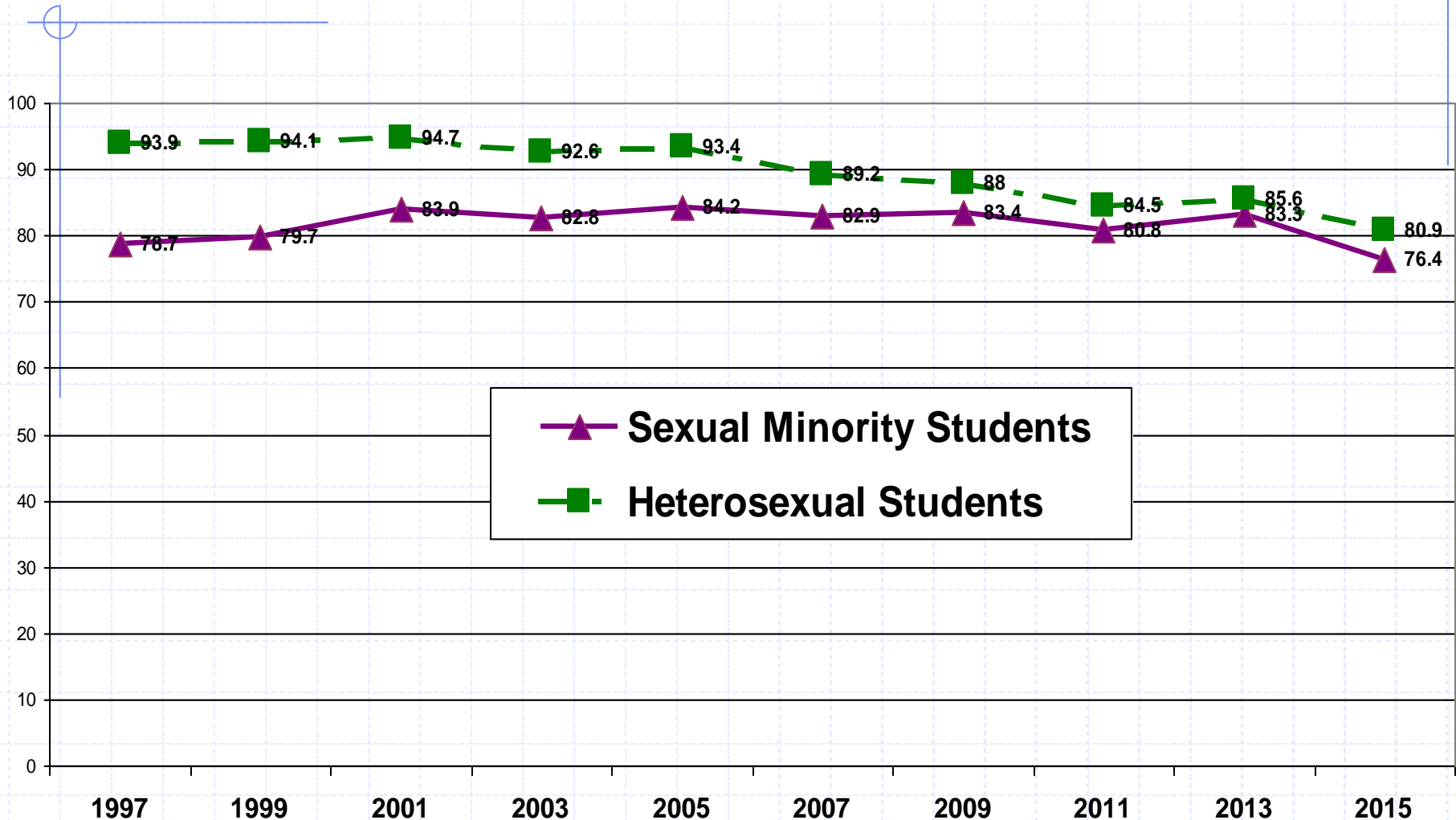
Blake, S., Ledsky, R., Lehmann, T., Goodenow, C., Sawyer, R., & Hack, T. (2001). Preventing sexual risk behaviors among gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents: The benefits of gay sensitive HIV instruction in schools.

American Journal of Public Health, 91, 940-946.

# Supports for LGBTQ Students in Massachusetts Secondary Schools



# Percent of Students Who Received AIDS Education in School, 1997-2015







◆ Data drive policy.

◆ Well, data can drive policy

# In small groups:

- ◆ What do the YRBS and Profiles data suggest to you about what can or should be done in schools to support sexual and gender minority students?
- ◆ In your own setting or area of concern, what data might be useful for supporting sexual and gender minority youth? What's available?

# Other resources:

- ◆ [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs)
- ◆ GLSEN.org: *National School Climate Survey*
- ◆ Veale, et al. (2015) *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*. Available at [www.saravyc.ubc.ca](http://www.saravyc.ubc.ca)

**Questions?      Comments?**

**Thank You!**

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